But real difficulties are not overcome by any such devices as this. The issuing of an order does not of itself render roads passable, or troops ready for the march, or the situation favorable for an offensive movement. Much study and careful consideration must be given to any military movements which involve as momentous issues as those which, on January 27th, were prescribed as a sort of celebration of "Washington's birthday on the 22d of the ensuing month. President Lincoln soon found that he was in no respect better off for having decreed the day and commanded unhesitating obedience. He soon learned that affairs of first-rate importance cannot be dispatched in such a summary fashion. In fact, he had hardly issued his order, when he became involved in a tedious, anxious, painful, and most unsatisfactory discussion with General McClellan regarding the line of advance of the Army of the Potomac.

The President had long been desirous that a movement should be undertaken by the Army of the Potomac with the object of dislodging the Confederates from Manassas Junction. He had recommended this to General McClellan early in December, 1861, giving him quite in detail an outline of his scheme.[1] McClellan replied that he had reason to believe that

the enemy could meet him with nearly equal forces, and that he was now considering another plan of campaign,—that is, a movement by the lower Chesapeake. The subject then dropped. But when Mr. Lincoln conferred with Generals McDowell and

[1] 14 W. R., 6, See also Heintzelman's Memorandum, October 18, 1861; 5 W. R., 622.